



# *The Virginia Saltwater Review*

*Plans and Statistics Department*  
2600 Washington Avenue, 3rd Floor  
Newport News, VA 23607-0756  
<http://www.mrc.virginia.gov>

Vol. 23, No. 11  
July 17, 2009

by

**Department of Plans and Statistics, Fisheries Management Division**

## **OVERVIEW**

This week, anglers have seen a good mix of fish across the area. Inshore, croaker and spot are increasing in size and keeping bottom droppers happy. Flounder seem to have increased in size, and several citations were reported. Inshore anglers are also finding drum, bluefish, Spanish mackerel and spadefish. And speaking of spadefish!!! Take a look at the new state record spadefish landed on June 13. For details, check out the press release on the following page.

Offshore, fishing is really heating up and gaffer dolphin were reported at the 26-Mile Hill, the Lumpy Bottom, and the Norfolk Canyon. Tuna are still around, but the appearance of white marlin has made everyone excited!

Last week, 35 teams competed in the 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Wallace's Bait and Tackle Cobia Tournament. The winning fish, an 84-pound brute, arrived at the dock 30 minutes before the official weigh-in start at 2:30pm. In all, 15 cobia hit the scales, with the smallest a 27.5 pounder. All fish were examined by our biological sampling team and information on their length, weight, and sex were recorded, and the otolith was removed to determine each cobia's age (work will be performed later this summer at our ageing lab). We wish to thank all of the anglers for their participation and cooperation with our biological sampling efforts at the tournament.

As was evident by the tournament, the cobia fishing in the Chesapeake Bay continues to be good. Almost half of all teams landed cobia to be weighed in, with fish being caught from Bluefish Rock all the way to Latimer Shoals. The brown beast of the bay continues to impress.





For Immediate Release  
July 13, 2009

## State Record Spadefish Landed

A 14-pound 14-ounce spadefish caught on June 13 by Roland E. Murphy of Fredericksburg, VA has been certified as a Virginia state record by the Virginia Saltwater Fishing Tournament.

Murphy caught the record fish while fishing at the Cell with Allan King on his 25-foot private boat Kingfish. The spadefish was tricked into hitting a piece of fresh clam, pinned to a 1/0 Gamakatsu hook, tied to a 30-pound fluorocarbon leader. Murphy was using a Penn Ocean Master rod matched with a Daiwa BG-30 reel spooled with either 40 or 50-pound Power Pro braided line. As Murphy worked the feisty fish to the side of the boat King was able to scoop it into the landing net. The pair immediately recognized the magnitude of the catch, as hand scales suggested the fish would weigh close to 15 pounds! A quick picture of the pair holding the fish was taken by King's wife Sherry, the fish went in the boat's live-well and the trio headed in to officially weigh the catch. The spadefish measured 25-1/4 inches in total length and had a girth of 26-1/4 inches.

Murphy's catch erases Virginia's only tied state record. Austin Edwards of Powhatan, VA had set the state record bar at 14 pounds on June 17, 2006 while fishing at the Cell and Mark Ottarson of North, VA matched that on June 7, 2007 while fishing at Wolf Trap Light.

For more information, contact Lewis Gillingham, Virginia Saltwater Fishing Tournament, 2600 Washington Ave, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Newport News, VA 23607, (757) 491-5160, [vswft@mrc.virginia.gov](mailto:vswft@mrc.virginia.gov).



## **THE FISHING REPORT**

### **Chincoteague**

According to Donna at Captain Bob's, nice-sized flounder are still being caught throughout the area. Hot spots are in the canal in front of Inlet View Campground and in the Assateague Channel in front of Tom's Cove Campground. There is a high throwback ratio at the Four Mouths. Croakers have begun to get large (14 to 15 inches) and can be found on the south side of Queen's Sound. Schools of snapper bluefish were spotted around Shelly Bay. Kingfish have arrived on the surf, so they should be moving into the inlets soon. Offshore, citation-sized dolphin were found at the Lumpy Bottom. The Parking Lot to the 26-Mile Hill has been productive. There are increasing sized yellowfin tuna (around 40-45 pounds) at the Norfolk Canyon, and Blackfish Banks has been maxing out with triggerfish and spadefish with a few tautog mixed in.

### **Wachapreague**

According to staff at the Wachapreague Marina, the bluefin tuna bite is hot! A 151- pound citation bluefin was brought in this week. There are also reported catches of blue marlin and white marlin. Inshore, a 7-pound flounder citation was reported from an angler drifting in the Wachapreague Inlet. There are numerous small flounder in the area, and large ones are scattered between them.

Offshore, tuna fishing has been really good according to staff at Captain Zed's. Anglers are catching a few dolphin and wahoo, and the 21-Mile Hill and 26-Mile Hill have been productive. Inshore, numerous flounder releases were reported, and keeper flounder found as well.

### **Cape Charles**

Staff at Chris' Bait and Tackle report that croaker are doing well out of Oyster by Buoy 5 and off of Morley's Wharf to Buoy 38A. Nice flounder being caught at the Cell, and red drum have been found off of Buoy 36A. Cobia were also biting from Buoys 13 to 42. A mixed bag of bottom fish are available off of the Kiptopeke Pier including flounder, croaker, and sea mullet. Sea mullet were biting off of Latimer Shoals, and spadefish were found at the Plantation Light.

Fishing has been slow at Cherrystone Bait and Tackle this week. Bottom fishing has been decent for those visiting the park.

### **Lower Bay/Bridge Tunnel**

The flounder bite has been good near Cobb's Marina this week. Anglers site casting for cobia along the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel were also having luck, while spadefish were biting around the islands as well. Offshore, the dolphin and tuna bite has been really good at the Norfolk Canyon. A few marlin have shown up in the last week as well.

Anglers out of Salt Ponds Marina are reporting flounder, puppy drum, and croaker. There are reports of boats there catching limits of flounder near the first island of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel.

Good fishing was reported from the York River Fishing Center. Citations include two flounder citations (9 pounds and 7 pounds) caught at the Cell on the 11<sup>th</sup>, and one 58-pound, 9-ounce cobia caught at the York Spit on the 10<sup>th</sup>. At the Gloucester Point Pier, anglers continue to catch spot and croaker with the occasional keeper flounder. Most are going out for cobia, flounder, spot, and croaker, and Spanish mackerel are beginning to show up around the York Spit.

Ken Neill, reporting secretary for the Peninsula Anglers Club, contributed the following:

Bluefin tuna in the 150-pound class are enticing anglers to the Hot Dog, 26-Mile Hill, and the Fingers. There are also plenty of bluefin in the 40- to 60-pound range. You are allowed to keep one fish over 47 inches and one fish from 27 to less than 47 inches per boat per day. The same areas are producing some gaffer dolphin and king mackerel. Further out, a mixed bite of yellowfin tuna, dolphin, wahoo, billfish, and the occasional bigeye tuna is keeping the offshore fleet busy. Fish are being caught from the Norfolk Canyon on down to the Cigar. The amberjack at the South Tower remain very plentiful and active. Spadefish have slowed down at the Chesapeake Light Tower, but they are still available along the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel and in other structures in the bay and over some of the inshore wrecks. Sheepshead are being caught at the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. Flounder fishing has picked up, and larger fish are coming from both the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel and the Cell. Spanish mackerel are all along the oceanfront and in the lower bay. Some large king mackerel have joined their smaller cousins along the oceanfront. Cobia fishing is steady. Most of the fish are coming from the Inner Middle Grounds and in the vicinity of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. Sight casting and chumming are both producing fish.

Dr. Julie Ball, IGFA International Representative for Virginia Beach, contributed the following:

It is difficult to decide what to fish for right now since so much is available. Inshore, the summer flounder scene is worth the effort, with more and larger flatfish becoming more common. The bigger fish are still coming from live bait offered along varying bottom structures toward the lower part of the bay. The Cell, Back River Reef, the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel structure, and inshore wrecks are just a few of the best flounder hot-spots lately. Drifters are also having good luck with strip baits near Buoy 42 and the Thimble Shoal Channel near Cape Henry.

There are plenty of 3- to 7-pound spadefish ganging up on suspended clam near the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel islands, with the 4<sup>th</sup> island providing the larger fish this week. The Chesapeake Light Tower, Tower Reef area, and nearshore wrecks are also providing similar action. The biggest fish are still available at the Cell, but action is slow.

Sheepshead are faring well, with most of these structure-oriented fish coming from the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel proper. Clams and fiddler crabs are the best bait. Tautog will also take your offering in the same areas, along with triggerfish. Triggers are numerous again this year. These aggressive little fish will hit most any bait.

The cobia scene is still going strong in lower bay waters. Sight casters are cleaning up, with big fish pushing up to around 80 pounds. Chummers are also finding steady action on the Latimer and the

Nine-Foot Shoal areas. Folks are also hooking red drum in these same areas. Black drum are continuing to offer results to casters targeting these massive fish around all four islands of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel.

Croaker are biting around the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel, the Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel, the Hampton Bar, and the Cell, where hardheads can range to over 2 pounds lately. The back waters of Oyster are giving up daily coolers full of medium-sized croaker. Nice spot are also available around the Concrete Ships, with smaller spot making a showing in Rudee Inlet. Puppy drum (juvenile red drum) are taking baits within both Lynnhaven and Rudee Inlets.

The excellent Spanish mackerel bite happening in lower bay waters and along the ocean front is still a crowd pleaser. Good sized Spanish averaging 21 to 22-inches and larger have been reported. With the frequent easterly winds lately, the king mackerel bite could take off soon.

Virginia tarpon made their debut on the Eastern Shore, but they have all but vanished over the last two weeks. Chris at Chris' Bait and Tackle theorizes that the cooler weather lately has caused the water temperature to drop. Silver kings are very sensitive to water temperature, making the tarpon fishery questionable for the season.

Inshore wrecks are holding some decent keeper-sized sea bass and triggerfish. Deep droppers are still pulling in good numbers of tilefish, rosefish and grouper, along with a smattering of sea bass and white hake.

Amberjack are ready for action on the local wrecks and at the South Tower. Jigs and live bait work well for these powerful fighters.

Offshore, the billfish bite is heating up, with multiple white marlin flags flying over the past week. The best action is coming from east of the cigar area, with some nice gaffer dolphin in the mix. Yellowfin tuna are a little hard to come by, but the bluefin tuna are filling in. Good bluefin action is coming from the inshore lumps, with the Fingers and 26-Mile Hill providing good action. Some of these fish are ranging to over 100 pounds.

### **Virginia Middle Bay**

Roger, at Jett's hardware, reports that the Spanish mackerel are finally starting to bite. While the bite is slow, the bite should improve quickly. The other usual summer suspects are also around. Bluefish can be caught by those trolling for the Spanish mackerel, and flounder have moved into their old haunts, the jetties at the mouth of the Potomac River. Croaker and spot are still available for the bottom fishermen as well.

Butch, at Garrett's Marina, reports that the fishing has slowed down due to all of the rain the area received last weekend. There are still reports of keeper flounder being caught around the White Stone Bridge. As the water quality starts to improve, expect the fishing to follow along.

Jerry Thrash, of Queen's Creek Outfitters, reported the following:

Bay surface temps near the Cell are back down to about 76 degrees. This may explain why most Spanish mackerel are staying south. There are some in the area, but no large numbers yet. Spanish mackerel favor 80-degree water, and they like tiny spoons pulled at high speed (6-8kts).

Good weather this weekend put a lot of people on the water. The spade fishing frenzy has slowed, but fish of all sizes are still available at the the Cell, Wolf Trap, and at other bay structures. Fresh clams fished in a slick of clam chum work best for these fish. Local creeks and rivers are producing keeper spot and croaker.

Flounder fishing has improved a bit with better numbers coming from Buoy 42 and the Cell areas. We registered three flounder citations this week (25.5 to 28 inches). Brief bites at the turn of a tide are producing best. Some keeper flounder are being taken from off Gwynn's Island and near Mosquito Point.

### **Virginia Beach**

According to staff at the Virginia Beach fishing Center, anglers are finding flounder, puppy drum (juvenile red drum), speckled trout, and taylor bluefish in Rudee Inlet. Inshore, Spanish mackerel, bluefish, mako shark, and cobia were reported. Spadefish have also been found, but are taking bait less now that the jellyfish have arrived. Anglers have also noted red and black drum. Offshore, numerous gaffer dolphin and some tuna were reported, and both white and blue marlin have been spotted.

Paula at Fisherman's Wharf Marina reports that anglers are still catching gaffer dolphin offshore, and white marlin fishing has been picking up. Last week, one boat reported 4 white marlin in one trip.

### **Virginia Piers**

Spot, croaker, and flounder were reported from the Ocean View Pier. The croaker are getting bigger, and few keeper flounder (around 22 to 23 inches) were also reported.

At the Lynnhaven Pier, staff reported catches of spot, croaker, sea mullet, bluefish, and a few keeper flounder. The spot have increased in size in recent weeks, and the blue crabs continue to be productive.

Crabbing is really good at the Virginia Beach Pier, and anglers are finding numerous spot and sea mullet. A few nice striped bass and puppy drum were landed this week, along with Spanish mackerel and spadefish.

At the Little Island Fishing Pier, anglers were catching spot, spadefish, and bluefish last week.

Staff at the Buckroe Fishing Pier reported catches of spot and croaker, along with a cobia and a keeper flounder last week.

## **Outer Banks, NC**

Offshore fishing out of Nags Head, has been slowing down. Anglers can still expect some good catches of dolphin, all three species of tuna, wahoo, and king mackerel. Bottom droppers have had continued success with blueline tilefish and various species of the snapper grouper complex. The billfishing has seen improving numbers being caught of all three species of billfish. Striped bass are biting approximately 12 to 15 miles offshore and some king mackerel around 8 to 10 miles offshore. Bluefish and Spanish mackerel were biting just outside the breakers, but numbers were unimpressive. Surf and pier fishermen had the same kind of catches for the bluefish and Spanish mackerel and were also having mediocre success on weakfish, speckled trout, flounder, sea mullet, spot and puffers. They did have great success with spadefish and sheepshead. Flounder fishing has been picking up for people working the shallows of Oregon Inlet, with spot and croaker also biting. Speckled trout around the Washington Baum Bridge were biting until approximately 9 a.m. during the last week, and a few red drum were around to give those speckled trout fishermen a test on their light weight tackle. Sheepshead and spadefish were around the pilings of bridges, but were only biting live fiddler crabs.

Surf fishing south of Oregon Inlet has been hit and miss, with wind direction playing a big role. The old saying of “wind from the east the fish are at their least” has been proving true. When the wind and fish did cooperate, the fishing was pretty good with cobia being sighted with a few biting live baits. Spot, sea mullet, flounder, sheepshead, spadefish, pompano, bluefish, and Spanish mackerel seemed to be biting best north of the jetties to the landmark row of hotels.

Offshore fishing out of Hatteras Inlet saw the best bite action from bailer sized dolphin. Other species were around, but fewer were caught than those that fished for them. These included blackfin tuna, amberjack, grouper and tilefish. Inshore fishermen had their best luck with Spanish mackerel and bluefish. Some red drum and speckled trout were around as well.

If you have additional information or would like further details contact Joe Grist at (757) 247-2237.

Please credit the Virginia Marine Resources Commission's THE SALTWATER REVIEW as the source of the fishing information.








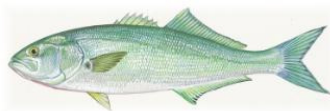
# ***ATTENTION VIRGINIA SALTWATER ANGLERS!!!***

## **THE VIRGINIA MARINE RESOURCES COMMISSION**

***WANTS YOUR FISH....  
TO MEASURE AND AGE.***

*You catch it, you fillet it,  
but instead of throwing the remains in the trash,  
please donate them to science.*

The Marine Sportfish Collection Project will focus on species of fish that are difficult to collect through the agency's normal sampling program. Anglers are asked to donate their filleted carcasses (head and tail intact) of legal and fresh-caught:

COBIA	SHEEPSHEAD	RED DRUM	BLACK DRUM
			
TAUTOG	KING MACKEREL	SPANISH MACKEREL	BLUEFISH (GREATER THAN 16 POUNDS OR 36 INCHES)
			

**In return for participating in the project, the agency will provide a  
ONE FREE PROJECT TEE SHIRT or HAT, FOR EACH PARTICIPANT,  
PER MONTH of the DONATION.**

**Please visit these bait and tackle merchants to participate:**

**Chris' Bait and Tackle (Capeville)  
Long Bay Pointe Marina (Virginia Beach)  
Wallace's Bait and Tackle (Hampton)  
Buckroe Fishing Pier (Hampton)**





# ATTENTION VIRGINIA SALTWATER ANGLERS!!!

**Get Hooked!**  
**Report at**  
**[www.vasaltwaterjournal.com](http://www.vasaltwaterjournal.com)**

The Virginia Marine Resources Commission wants to know about the saltwater fish you caught and if you threw it back or took it home for dinner. How big was it? What species was it? Where did you catch it? This self-reported catch-and-release information will be posted on-line, giving the recreational angler a broader picture of what everyone else is catching -- and where.



The Fisherman's Journal is a tool intended to benefit the individual angler, the fishing community, and fishery managers. It allows individual anglers to keep an easy-to-retrieve record of their successful fishing experiences. It allows the fishing community to share and learn about other anglers' experiences. Finally, it benefits fishery managers by allowing them to assess fish populations by analyzing data provided by you, the recreational fisherman.

You will be able to report catch-and-release ranges, in addition to individual fish kept or released.

On those days that you catch-and-release 50 bluefish, you can just report the number caught and a range of lengths. Reporting individual measurements on more highly prized species -- such as Red Drum, Striped Bass and Flounder -- provides a greater benefit for everyone.

Anglers also may report their fishing trip information, including general location, time of day, weather and water conditions and type of gear and bait used. This information could be extremely valuable to other anglers to give them an idea of what is caught, where it is caught, and what bait is working on what species.

This self-reporting program will help anglers to become more successful and will provide fishery managers with important anecdotal information on recreational catches. The voluntary on-line reporting system is called the "Saltwater Fisherman's Journal," and is found at [www.vasaltwaterjournal.com](http://www.vasaltwaterjournal.com).

A screenshot of the Virginia Marine Resources Commission's "Recreational Fishing Online Reporting" website. The header includes the commission's name and logo. The main content area is titled "Recreational Saltwater Fishing" and includes a welcome message to "Jgrist". It features two prominent announcements: "Red Drum Reports are Needed!" and "New 2008 Tautog Regs". A sidebar on the left shows statistics for June 16, 2008, including 1,457 members, 295 trips, and 3,941 catches. At the bottom, there are links for "Related Links" and "Help".

New 2008 Tautog Regs	
Closed Season	May 1 through June 24
Minimum Size Limit	14 inches
Possession Limit	4 per person

# Introducing the Virginia Fishing Line Recycling Program!

- Please help keep our waterways cleaner and safer for:
  - fish
  - birds
  - marine mammals
  - boaters and swimmers
- Deposit used or tangled monofilament fishing line into specially marked containers!

## VMRC-Managed



## Locations!\*

Ocean View Fishing Pier, Norfolk

Long Bay Pointe Marina, Virginia Beach

Buckroe Fishing Pier, Hampton

Chris' Bait and Tackle, Cape Charles

Capt. Bob's Marina, Chincoteague



\*DGIF manages other locations throughout Virginia

The Virginia Fishing Line Recycling Program is run jointly by the Virginia Marine Resources Commission and the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries with support from the Boat US Foundation.

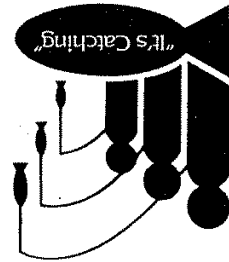
If you have any questions about the program, or suggestions for new container locations, please contact Alicia Nelson at (757) 247-2244 or email

[alicia.nelson@mrc.virginia.gov](mailto:alicia.nelson@mrc.virginia.gov).



FIRST CLASS MAIL

TAKE A FRIEND FISHING



FISHERIES PLANS/STATISTICS OFFICE  
VIRGINIA MARINE RESOURCES COMMISSION  
2600 WASHINGTON AVE., 3<sup>RD</sup> FLOOR  
NEWPORT NEWS, VIRGINIA 23607

*Practice*

## CAREFUL CATCH

**REDUCE STRESS FACTORS THAT KILL FISH**

**Exhaustion \* Loss of Slime \* Wounds \* Time out of Water**